

tional president of the Schiller Institute proposed that the Western countries should make you a special representative for Afghanistan to have a common approach for how to do this thing. And in that connection, I would just reflect, as a Dane, you say that when you first set up the program, Denmark was one of the main sponsors. You know, doing above its share of funding concerning how to get rid of narcotics. It's very ironic that later, we find the Danish troops being deployed in the Helmand province under the leadership of the British troops, and going around, year after year after year doing the fighting,

while the poppy seeds numbers were going up by 30-fold during this "liberation" by British and Danish troops.

And therefore, when the Danish government right now is sitting, thinking through what went wrong, they could actually go back to what we did then, and say, "We have a moral obligation to do this right again, and what better way than by helping out directly, funding and contributing to such a program. Now we want to get rid of the poppies, and we want instead to have real economic development." But that's just me, as a Dane, reflecting on this!

H.E. Ambassador Ahmad Farooq

A Perspective on Moving Afghanistan Forward

This is an edited transcript of the presentation of H.E. Ahmad Farooq, the Ambassador from Pakistan to the Kingdom of Denmark, to a seminar, co-sponsored by the Schiller Institute and the Copenhagen bureau of EIR, "Afghanistan: What Now? Peace Through Economic Development," held in Copenhagen, Denmark on October 11, 2021. The seminar was moderated by Tom Gillesberg.



Embassy of Pakistan in Denmark

H.E. Ambassador Ahmad Farooq

Thank you very much, Tom, and thank you very much to the Schiller Institute for organizing this event on a very important issue: the future of Afghanistan and which way we would like it to move forward; and for giving me this opportunity of presenting Pakistan's perspective on this subject.

A Bit of History

I would like to begin by giving some context to what Pakistan feels should happen now with regard to Afghanistan, with a bit of history of how we see this situation has evolved over the last 40 years, because Afghanistan has been in a state of turmoil for 40 years, and not much is said [about the fact] that the conflict actually started in 1979, and not in 2001; and Pakistan, along with Afghanistan, has been facing its fallout for the last 40 years.

The withdrawal of the Soviet troops in 1988, was

followed by a civil war that took place between the different factions of the Mujahideen, that were fighting the Soviets. And a key reason for that to happen was that once the objective, of expelling the Soviets from Afghanistan was achieved, the West and the U.S., they decided to walk away from Afghanistan. If they had stayed there, and had supported the peacebuilding process in that country, perhaps the history of that country would have been much different.

From this chaos of the civil war, we saw Afghanistan descend into the top drug producing country in the world. It became a safe-haven for the international terrorist groups, al-Qaeda in particular, and organized crime that was going on there. The Taliban, basically, they emerged from this chaos of the civil war, with the promise of bringing stability and peace to the country. What we remember, however, from their rule, is more the kind of human rights violations that were committed, especially against women and girls.

In the period that followed the September 2001 attacks, Afghanistan did make progress, at least from the outside, one can say; but obviously, as both Professor Arlacchi and Hussein [Askary] stated, and the facts that they have presented [at this seminar], actually there were serious problems that remained unresolved.

The conflict continued to linger, and the country

faced serious challenges, in terms of bad governance, and corruption of the various Afghan governments. The fact that there was never a clear exit strategy for the international community to come out of Afghanistan, is basically what played a role in what we see today and the fact that we were not able to achieve long-term peace in the country, despite such a large international military presence and despite the fact, as it is claimed, \$2 or \$3 trillion were spent in the country.

Eventually, in the last two years, the U.S. came to this realization that there is no military solution and they have to get out of Afghanistan. At that point, they decided to talk to the Taliban. Pakistan had been advocating—for a long time, from the period when al-Qaeda had ceased to be a threat, as a terrorist entity, that there was a need for a political process, a dialogue in Afghanistan, because there could not be any military solution there. The Afghans, if you look at their history, they have never succumbed to any foreign military pressures. So, the Taliban were a political reality, and the Americans needed to talk to them. Eventually, when the Americans decided to talk to them, Pakistan did play its role in facilitating the dialogue process. However, we also advised them, that the withdrawal from Afghanistan has to be accompanied, in tandem, by progress in the peace process. Once a withdrawal date was set which was not connected with the progress in the peace process, the prospects for a political solution faded.

The ultimate collapse of the Afghan Security Forces, without putting up a fight, and the fleeing of the former President Ashraf Ghani and his associates, has basically brought us to where we stand today.

During the four decades of conflict in Afghanistan, my figures may be a bit different from what Hussein presented, we believe over a million Afghans have been killed, injured, maimed, traumatized, and it has basically resulted in destroying the polity and the economy of the country. The people of Afghanistan, they desire peace, they desire development, and so do Afghanistan's neighbors, especially Pakistan.

Pakistan has a very long and complex history in terms of our relations with Afghanistan, and the last four decades have particularly been the most difficult. The two countries are linked, inextricably, through ties of geography, history, ethnicity, religion, and culture. Most importantly, Pakistan provides Afghanistan its lifeline: Afghanistan is a landlocked country, and most of its international trade takes place through Pakistan,

as we have a transit trade agreement with them. Over the last four decades, Pakistan has hosted over 3-4 million refugees; several generations of Afghans have grown up in Pakistan and have not ever seen their home country. So, no matter what happens in Afghanistan or whoever is in control of the country, it has serious ramifications for Pakistan. We do not have that luxury of walking away from that situation, as has been done by the West—twice.

For us, it has also been a compulsion, that whoever is in control of Afghanistan, we have to have some kind of working relationship with them. When you look at the situation, if the trade of the country is going through Pakistan; we have a long border with them; there are people who have ties, who belong to the same tribe, they are crossing over; so all that requires that we have to have a functional relationship with the government, whether it's *de jure* or *de facto*.

Now, in the entire duration of this four decades of conflict, Pakistan after Afghanistan, has been the most affected country by this conflict. In the initial period of the war, we had to suffer the weaponization of our society; we were affected by drugs coming in; we were affected by the pressure of the refugees, because when they came in, they had to be housed. But eventually with such a large number of people coming in, they destroyed our ecology, especially in the area where they were living in huge camps, in those days.

And then, following the September 2001 attacks, the conflict, which was previously restricted to Afghanistan, was brought to within our own borders, as Pakistan became the battleground for the fight between terrorist groups. Over these last 20 years, we have suffered casualties of almost 80,000 people, and economic losses of over \$150 billion. The return to normalcy has been achieved at great cost, both in terms of the lives that we've lost, as well as treasure, and that's what our government and our people want to preserve.

Moving Ahead

After these decades of instability, Pakistan wants to focus on its economic development, and a key aspect of that is regional connectivity. We want to reach out especially to the countries of Central Asia, to meet our energy needs, for promoting trade, and attracting international investment. The Prime Minister of Pakistan has recently outlined a policy of geo-economics for the future of Pakistan, rather than focussing on geopolitics, of what we had been doing in the past, and a peaceful

Afghanistan is the centerpiece of that. Without peace in Afghanistan, it is not possible for us to achieve the economic progress that we desire for our future.

Any continued instability in Afghanistan, obviously, if (God forbid) Afghanistan descends into a civil war, Pakistan will be the country, and perhaps our other neighbor Iran, which will be most directly impacted by it, in terms of terrorism, and the spillover of refugees. We continue to host over 3 million Afghan refugees as I mentioned before, and we provide sustenance to them, through our own resources, because the international assistance for the upkeep of refugees dried up somewhere in the early '90s. The Afghan refugees can access our health services, our educational institutions, our banking system, and they can earn a livelihood.

The fact that in this last 20 years, when supposedly there was so much money that was being poured into Afghanistan, and there was no civil war, none of these refugees decided to go back to Afghanistan. So, if there had been any attraction for them, they would have left, and gone back to their home country, because despite the fact that they're able to earn a livelihood in Pakistan, even for the children that have been born in Pakistan, they don't enjoy Pakistani citizenship. They remain Afghanistan citizens. So, they would have gone back to Afghanistan, if the situation there had presented them a better option.

So, now, as we move forward, Afghanistan stands at a critical juncture, and the Afghan people, with the support of the international community, can definitely build a better future for them. Learning from the mistakes of the past, we've seen now, what happened in 1988, and again, the fact that the West has decided to leave Afghanistan, it should not mean that they abandon Afghanistan because obviously, that will prolong the conflict and cause suffering for its people, which will not be to the benefit of anyone.

The recent humanitarian statistics about the humanitarian situation which are coming out from different UN agencies, are quite alarming: According to UNICEF, 18 million Afghans are in urgent need of assistance, and over 1 million Afghan children can suffer serious malnutrition and starvation in the coming months. So, it is important to prevent this situation from deteriorating any further, because that will create a huge humanitarian disaster, which will affect not only Afghanistan itself, but the region, and other areas of the world.

Pakistan's Contribution

Pakistan believes that it is important that we should provide access to Afghanistan's financial resources, in order to prevent a further deterioration of the economy of the country. It is also essential to prevent inflation, rising prices, growing poverty, and preventing a mass exodus of refugees from the country.

On our part, from Pakistan, we are playing the role in terms of assisting the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, and together with UN agencies we have developed an air-bridge through which emergency supplies are now being airlifted to Afghanistan: That includes food and medical items. Pakistan itself has dispatched three plane loads of emergency equipment, especially medical supplies to Afghanistan, and we are continuing to do so, especially food aid, through the land corridor. This fact was recently acknowledged by the visiting U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman—she was in Islamabad on Friday [Oct. 8]. She appreciated and acknowledged that and encouraged Pakistan to continue doing that.

We are also, in terms of the overall political environment, in consultations with all the neighbors of Afghanistan, including China, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and also Russia, in finding a long-term peaceful solution for the country. We continue to call on Afghanistan—and the Taliban, to form an open, inclusive governmental structure, that practices moderate and sound policies with regards, especially to human rights, and ethnic groups, women and children.

Terrorism that has emanated from Afghanistan, remains for us a major concern since we have been a major victim of terrorism. And so, we have been calling upon Taliban that they should not allow the use of their territory by the various terrorist groups that are present there.

Pakistan is also part of the extended Troika format, so that includes Russia, China, the United States and Pakistan is the fourth country, in terms of finding the political options for Afghanistan.

As my other co-panelists have said, this is a time where the international community has to apply a different approach, for bringing peace to Afghanistan. Military options have been tried, and they have failed. We have to look towards how we can help Afghanistan develop economically, and there has to be an engagement and incentivized approach, as Professor Arlacchi also mentioned, in encouraging the Taliban to do what

we expect of them.

In conclusion, I would once again like to thank the Schiller Institute for organizing this very important debate, and indeed, we would like to continue working with you, in finding answers.

And, at the end, I would just like to state that the national poet of Pakistan, his name is [Muhammad] Iqbal—the Iranians know him as “Iqbal Lahori”—he

said somewhere in the early 20th century, in the 1920s about Afghanistan, that Afghanistan is the heart of Asia. So that’s where the name of that political process “Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process” comes from. He said, if there is peace in Afghanistan, there is peace in Asia. And if there is unrest in Afghanistan, there will be unrest in Asia.

Thank you very much. [applause]

Statements Received from China and Iran

The Embassies of China and Iran to Denmark, submitted the following statements to the seminar, “Afghanistan: What Now? Peace Through Economic Development,” co-sponsored by the Schiller Institute and the Copenhagen bureau of EIR, held in Copenhagen, Denmark on October 11, 2021.

Statement from the Chinese Embassy on Afghanistan

As a close neighbor of Afghanistan, China has always respected its sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, adhered to non-interference in its internal affairs and pursued a friendly policy towards all Afghanistan people. We hope that the Taliban will build a broad-based and inclusive political structure, pursue moderate and prudent domestic and foreign policies, protect the rights of women and children, resolutely combat terrorist forces, and develop friendly and cooperative relations with its neighbors and other countries. We sincerely hope that Afghanistan can find a development path suitable to its national conditions. To meet the immediate needs of the Afghan people, China has announced that it will provide 200 million RMB worth of supplies to Afghanistan, including 3 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines. When the security and other conditions allow, China is willing to assist Afghanistan to build projects that will help improve livelihoods, and will do its best to support Afghanistan in its peaceful reconstruction and economic development.

We call upon the international community to play a constructive role in Afghanistan’s peaceful reconstruction on the basis of respecting the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Afghanistan, respecting the will of the Afghan people, and adhering to the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned principle. We need to have more dialogue and give more advice to the new

authority in Afghanistan without any prejudice or pre-conceived idea, and we should not create any difficulty for them. Humanitarian assistance is of utmost urgency. Economic sanctions must stop. Unilateral sanctions or restrictions on Afghanistan should be lifted. The country’s foreign currency reserves are national assets that should not be used as a bargaining chip to exert political pressure on Afghanistan.

The abrupt change in Afghanistan reminds us once again that military intervention and power politics do not have popular support, and foreign models and the so-called democratic transformation are not sustainable. What relevant countries have done in Afghanistan in the past 20 years has ended in failure. They should seriously reflect on it and correct mistakes timely, instead of walking away from the problems of their own doing and leaving them to Afghanistan and other countries in the region. After all, they bear the inescapable political, security, economic and humanitarian responsibilities for Afghanistan and are more obliged than other countries to help Afghanistan maintain stability, prevent chaos, and embark on the road of peace and reconstruction. They should earnestly honor their commitment to the Afghan people and take concrete actions to participate in the international community’s assistance efforts in Afghanistan.

Statement by Iran Embassy Representative at Schiller Institute Seminar on Afghanistan

The representative of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran at this seminar, whilst emphasizing on the need for an inclusive government, respect for civil and democratic rights of all citizens without discrimination in Afghanistan, highlighted the important role the neighboring countries can play in helping peace and security to be established in the country, and alleviating the sufferings of its people.